

Legislative Recommendations for Strengthening Families

Inadequate Support for Families and Loved Ones of Incarcerated Minnesotans

In June 2021, the Office of the Ombuds for Corrections published the Strengthening Families Report which examined:

- currently available supports for families of people incarcerated in Minnesota prisons;
- barriers that may be preventing them from easily navigating the system; and
- resources and programs that could strengthen families' ability to self-advocate.

The report found that existing resources and supports available to families are inadequate. The full report can be found at <https://mn.gov/obfc/reports/>.

Recommendations: DOC Family Support Position and Fund Community Programs

- **Fund a new Supplemental Family Support Position at DOC:** The legislature should fund a Department of Corrections (DOC) position focused on family support, navigation, and engagement. DOC has a parenting coordinator at the women's prison, MCF-Shakopee, and a child support liaison, but no staff to focus on helping implement or coordinate family support and connections system-wide. Without more coordination, it will be difficult to fully leverage existing resources and adequately prioritize integrating family support and connections into policies and programs.
- **Fund Community Programs:** There are numerous community groups waiting to do the work, but who need resources and opportunities to support families of currently incarcerated individuals. The Governor and Legislature should fund community organizations who are trusted by the communities they serve to provide opportunities to better navigate corrections systems and connect with their loved ones who are incarcerated.

Incarceration negatively affects families and children and there are very limited targeted resources available for families in Minnesota. Available research and input from families, stakeholders, and subject matter experts point to an urgent need for targeted resources to support families in navigating the system.

Contact: Assistant Ombuds Margaret Zadra, margaret.zadra@state.mn.us, 651-539-4523

The Office of the Ombuds for Corrections was established "to promote the highest attainable standards of competence, efficiency, and justice in the administration of corrections." More information can be found at <https://mn.gov/obfc/>.